

LIGHTNING ENCOUNTER

The sleek British Electric Lightning supersonic fighter squatted menacingly on the Operational Readiness Platform at an airfield in East Anglia, England, during the early sixties. Just below the cockpit on each side of the fighter, the glass nose-cone of a deadly Firestreak air-to-air heat-seeking missile sparkled in the weak early morning sunlight. Strapped into his ejector seat, the pilot remained blissfully unaware of what was to come.

The pilot shifted uncomfortably in his ejector seat as one of the parachute straps chafed his shoulder. Operational readiness duty was a real drag: two hours non-stop sitting strapped into a tiny cockpit waiting for a Russian bomber that had less chance of materialising than Venus on the horizon. Wincing slightly, the pilot re-adjusted his straps and automatically scanned the instrument panel for the twentieth time that hour.

Battery master switches on, gyros stabilised, both throttles at ground-idle, interception radar at standby. The pilot's right hand fiddled idly with the cover over the fuel booster switches. If an order to scramble came through on the secure 'telebrief' cable from Operations, all he had to do was flick both fuel boosters on and press the twin-engine starter buttons. After that, things would happen very quickly.

The pilot relaxed again and smiled to

himself. This was his tenth duty on operational readiness in a single year, and none had ever told him to scramble. Why should they?—Russia was not in the habit of attacking England early on a Sunday morning. As if to contradict his thoughts, the telebrief came to life with startling suddenness:

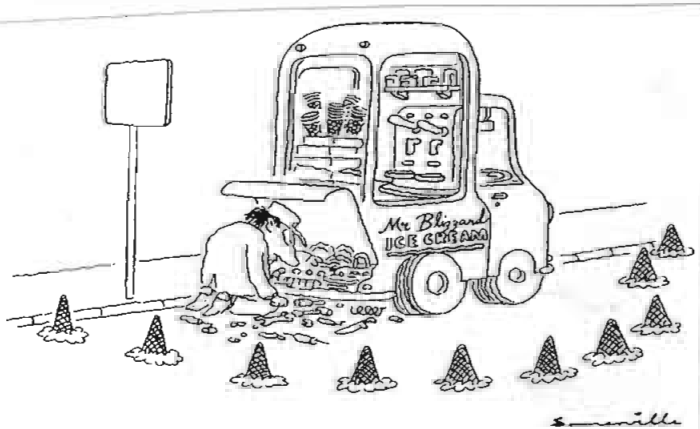
"02, intruder intruder: scramble scramble scramble!"

Hesitating for only a split-second, the pilot flipped the plastic cover clear of the fuel boosters, switched both on and moved his white-gloved hand swiftly backwards to the engine starter buttons. With a deafening hiss the two isopropyl nitrate starters span the Avon jet engines up to 20% r.p.m., lighting both with a sudden roar that sent birds scattering away across the airfield in all directions. Pushing both throttles forward as quickly as possible, the pilot thumbed his transmit switch briefly:

"02 rolling."

"Roger 02, clear take off. Climb out on 105 degrees and call Ground Control Interception."

Turning directly onto the runway threshold, the pilot watched the engine per cent gauges as they climbed to 100 r.p.m., then deliberately pushed both throttles sideways and forward through the afterburner gate. Both jet nozzle indicators flicked to the



'full open' position and the Lightning crouched with shock, suddenly subjected to thirty-three thousand pounds of thrust from the glowing jet nozzles. Holding the nose down, the pilot watched the white runway centre-line markers flash past while the air-speed indicator rapidly came alive: 100 knots, 120, 140, 160, 180 knots and he pulled back slightly on the stick, pressing the undercarriage 'up' button at the same time.

Still at less than 100 feet, the Lightning's wheels slammed into the wheel bays and its trim shifted slightly as the fighter increased speed to more than 250 knots before crossing the airfield boundary. Glancing briefly at the instruments, the pilot pulled back hard on the controls and banked right onto his course of 105 degrees. The Lightning was climbing like a rocket and the pilot switched his attention to the machmeter. Just in time, he cancelled the afterburners to avoid breaking the sound barrier in a steep climb over land.

"GCI, 02 climbing out on 105 degrees. Course to steer?"

"We have you 02. Turn right onto 169 degrees and climb to forty-two thousand for high-speed run. Target is estimated at more than one hundred thousand feet, tracking in from France. You will have to zoom climb, over."

"02, copied. What target, over?"

"If we knew that 02, you wouldn't be airborne."

"Roger, copied."

Glancing downwards, the pilot saw the East Anglian coast sliding away behind him and pushed both throttles up through the afterburner gate. Less than four minutes after the engine starter buttons were pressed, the Lightning shuddered slightly as it passed through the sound barrier and levelled out at forty-two thousand feet. Adjusting the trim button on the controls, the pilot concentrated as the Lightning, now flying straight and level, increased speed rapidly: mach 1.1, 1.3, 1.5, 1.7...

"02, turn right onto 173 degrees and prepare to zoom."

"02, copied."

As his speed increased to maximum, the pilot checked the interception radar and selected his Firestreak missiles. He had no idea what was up there but it paid to be ready for anything, and it seemed unlikely his 30 mm cannon would be of much use.

"02, turn left onto 171 degrees, zooming in ten, copy?"

"02, copied."

"Three, two, one, go go go!"

The pilot's vision greyed-out as he pulled

swiftly back on the controls and six times the force of gravity pressed down on his body, rapidly draining the blood away from his brain. The python coils of his G-suit squeezed his legs and lower torso in a vice-like grip, preventing total blackout. The Lightning was now hurtling upwards faster than a pistol bullet, trading its supersonic speed for extra height in an attempt to get close to the target. The altimeter started slowing down: seventy, seventy-five, eighty, eighty-five thousand feet.

Without warning, the pilot suffered from transient vertigo as the world suddenly seemed to turn upside down. Where before the Earth had been dark and the sky light, the Earth was now a bright curve and the sky as black as pitch, with stars twinkling in the heavens as the Lightning approached the edge of space.

Very slowly the Lightning flattened out, its sharply swept wings struggling to keep a grip on the rarefied atmosphere. With his right hand on the sluggish controls, the pilot flipped down the radar visor with his left and selected four-bar scan. A bright orange radar echo confirmed target range less than two miles above to port, and he glanced out of the cockpit.

"GCI, I have the target on radar and visual; range two miles; no missile lock."

"02, confirm negative infrared signature?"

"02. Confirmed negative infrared. Target is oval in shape with a shiny metallic surface; not taking evasive action."

"Roger 02, try to close target, copy?"

"02 copied, turning port now..."

With an explosive roar, the Lightning's

cabin pressurisation started to fail, the gyros toppled and the controls slammed to the right, breaking the fighter's tenuous hold on the rarefied atmosphere and sending it into a lethal inverted spin. As the Lightning dropped like a stone, the pilot's pressure jerkin automatically inflated and the visor on his Taylor-Baxter pressure helmet slammed shut. At these altitudes a complete cabin pressure failure could result in human blood boiling in less than three seconds. As the Lightning span helplessly towards the Earth, hoar-frost started forming on the inside of the cockpit canopy, blinding the pilot completely. Totally disorientated he pulled back on the controls, kicked the rudder in what he thought was the opposite direction to the spin, and pushed the throttles through the afterburner gate. As the fighter dropped through fifty thousand feet, the spinning blur outside the cockpit started to decrease and the Lightning came slowly under control in an inverted spiral, travelling towards the Earth in excess of mach 1.3. Still blinded, the pilot flick-rolled as the fighter flashed down through thirty thousand feet, before shakily regaining full control.

"02, what's happening? 02 come in."

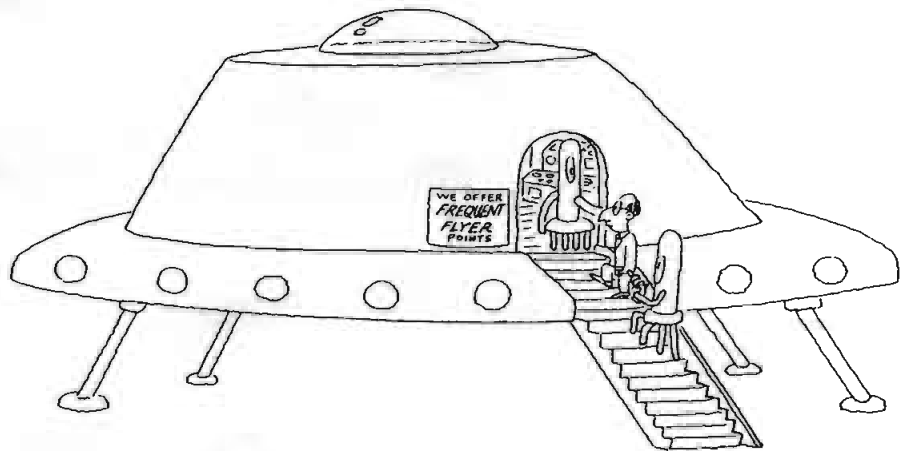
"Pressure failure, repeat pressure failure. Flying blind. Give me a course for base, over."

"02 turn right onto 292 degrees, distance to run 97 miles. Did you manage to identify the target, over?"

"Negative. It wasn't one of theirs and it wasn't one of ours."

"02, are you calling a UFO?"

"That's affirmative GCI; unidentified flying object."



THE TWILIGHT ZONE

"Shit! How are you going to land blind, over?"

"With difficulty, GCI! Ever tried greasing one of these things onto a runway at 200 miles an hour with frosted windows?"

"You are authorised for ejection over the sea, copied?"

"Too cold. I'll give it one try at base and if that's a no-go then I'll head back over the sea and eject."

"Copied 02. You are to file a classified report immediately after landing. Contact Approach radar; good luck, out."

Dropping below ten thousand feet, the pilot unlocked his Taylor-Baxter pressure visor and pushed it away from his face. Reaching forward he used his white leather gloves to scrape some of the frost from the bulletproof windshield, finally clearing a blurred space through which he could see the horizon.

"Approach, this is 02 calling Pan Pan. Pan, I have limited vision and fuel state is low. Requesting straight-in priority approach with radar talkdown."

"Roger 02, circuit is clear. Contact Ground Control Approach radar for final let down."

"02, copied."

At twenty miles range the pilot extended the twin air brakes by pressing the switch back on number one throttle, selected landing flap and adjusted the trim. As he closed to within twelve miles, the undercarriage lowered with a reassuring 'clunk' and the pilot throttled back still further.

"02, this is GCA. You are on the correct heading but slightly above the glide slope. Adjust your rate of descent. That's nice 02, right on the glide slope; hold it there!"

As the flare-path came in sight the pilot took over manually, squinting through the cleared space of his windshield as the runway rushed at him through the haze. With his heart in his mouth the pilot rounded out and dropped the Lightning neatly on the runway threshold at 175 knots. After slamming the throttles back to ground idle, he swiftly moved his left hand upwards and pulled the brake parachute release. With a reassuring jerk the brake chute opened and the Lightning lost speed swiftly.

Turning off the runway, the pilot punched the brake chute release button and unlocked the cockpit canopy. As he taxied back to squadron dispersal, the canopy slowly raised itself on its hydraulic jacks and the pilot eagerly breathed in the fresh winter breeze. For the first time he realised just how cold he was. England in winter was hot by comparison with the temperatures at the edge of space itself. Climbing

down the cockpit ladder, the pilot was approached by the cheerful crew chief:

"What was it sir?"

"Oh, nothing much, chief; probably a weather balloon!"

"Yes sir, that's very interesting sir."

As the pilot staggered away towards the crew room on his shaky, half-frozen legs, an airman standing next to the chief turned to him with an incredulous look on his face:

"Why did you ask him that, chief? You know the radio fitters taped the whole mission on their spare UHF radio."

"Sure they did but the pilot doesn't know that. He's the third in less than a year who's got to write a classified report on a UFO. He's also the third to tell me he was scrambled to intercept a 'weather balloon'."

"Why not just tell them we know about the UFOs?"

"Because, lad, if we did that we'd be ordered not to record the missions and then we'd never be able to keep track of what's going on up there..."

A group of ground crew fitters ambled casually across the tarmac to the glistening Lightning. An armourer clambered into the cockpit, turned the battery master switches on and selected the Firestreak sensor circuit. Unnoticed by the pilots in the crewroom, another armourer walked across the grass one hundred yards away puffing at a cigarette. Looking down from the cockpit the first armourer could see the small cyclops infrared eye on each Firestreak missile faithfully tracking his colleague's cigarette 100 yards away. Nothing wrong with the missiles at all. In turn, the armourer was replaced by an instrument fitter who plugged in the ground power and switched on the gyros. In less than two minutes both gyros erected and stabilised. Smiling at the small group at the foot of the steps, the instrument fitter slowly lowered the half-ton cockpit canopy and pressurised the cockpit from the ground supply. No problems: the pressurisation was working as it always had—perfectly.

No doubt about it. Those French weather balloons really did have some strange equipment on board. No wonder the disgruntled pilots were forced to keep writing "classified" reports on large bags of helium with the apparent ability to completely cripple a front-line fighter at will. UFOs? Perish the thought—who'd believe rubbish like that anyway!

© by Otto Jewell, 4 August 1993

AFTERWORLD ANTENNA ANGST

A New Zealand spiritualist who communes with departed souls has complained that terrestrial signals may interfere with his afterlife line.

The US telephone company BellSouth is to erect 34 antennae in and around Wellington for a cellular phone network. The company surveyed the locals for reactions to the plan but probably didn't bargain on the clairvoyant's complaint.

His case was that his contact with the departed friends and loved ones of his clients would be adversely affected by the antennae. BellSouth took his concerns seriously enough to send a staff member around to "talk through his concerns". Perhaps they picked up a few tips in the process.

In any case, it appears the soothsayer has been soothed and BellSouth is reportedly confident he won't be taking the matter to a higher authority.

(Sources: *Sunshine Coast Daily, The Australian*, 24 August 1993)

COWABUNGLE!

Just when you thought sex-starved Norwegian bears were the ringleaders in the cattle mutilation stakes (see "Twilight Zone" vol. 2, no. 15), along comes alarming fresh evidence from Alabama (so it couldn't have been the bears after all, unless they've been mysteriously transported to the USA!—Ed.)

In the six months to April, 32 cattle mutilations were reported in two northeastern counties.

Of one such mutilation, rancher Jimmy Pope of Geraldine, Alabama, said, "The cow's udder had been cut off cleaner than you could cut it with a razor. ...I'd be willing to bet my life it was no predator."

The cow, found in a pasture 500 feet from his house, "had an oval-shaped cut on her shoulder where skin and had been removed; there was no blood nowhere, and the mouth had been cut in an oval shape and the teeth had been removed surgically," Mr Pope said.

Denver pathologist Dr John Altshuler examined under the microscope some tissue samples from another Alabama cow. These showed that the blood around the cut tissue had been "cooked", indicating that temperatures of at least 300 degrees had been used to make or cauterise the cuts.

Police officer Ted Oliphant of Fyffe, Alabama, reported traces of a chemical substance found at the scene of a cattle mutilation.

"We found a white substance on a cow's right rib cage and on the ground next to it. I put it into a plastic wrapper, and back at the office when I touched some of it with the metal tip of my pen, it turned to liquid within one second. I put the rest on a piece of paper. We sent it to a molecular biologist for analysis and found it was composed of aluminum, titanium, oxygen and silicon. This is not a substance that occurs in nature," said Oliphant.

This new spate of mutilations in Alabama fits the classic pattern.

According to Officer Oliphant, "It varies from animal to animal, but generally the same things are taken. Sex organs are removed with an oval incision, rectums are cored out, tongues are cut out, jaws stripped to the bone, milk sacs are removed, sometimes a very large incision and internal organs are taken."

Rancher Jimmy Pope said he was woken up by his barking Labrador retrievers about 3 am, but saw nothing when he looked outside. His neighbour, 3 miles away, told Pope he had seen a low-flying helicopter late that night.

"We've got helicopters in about 90% of

these cases, either reported by the farmers themselves or their neighbours," said Oliphant. "They're these light blue with grey bottoms, Bell Jet Rangers with no markings on them. We don't know who's running these things, but they're pushing their luck. The farmers are driving around with high-powered rifles in their trucks."

(Source: *Rocky Mountain News*, 27 April 1993)

500 KILOVOLT VISION

A woman claiming that electromagnetic fields from a power line near her home enabled her to see through things, has stunned a public utility commission hearing in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Dianna McPheat, 37, has found that the fields also enhanced her hearing abilities and caused plants to grow in spiral shapes. She first became concerned about the 500 kV power line when her bathroom light would stay on even after it was switched off. Appliances would start without being turned on. Her children discovered fluorescent bulbs would light up in their hands when they took them into the backyard.

The family reported other troublesome

side-effects such as frequent nosebleeds, chest pains, sleeping disorders, three-week-long headaches, memory loss and general disorientation.

Pennsylvania Power and Light said it has conducted "extensive testing" of the five-acre property and found "normal levels of EMF". This is not much comfort for Dianna McPheat—particularly when a woman who previously lived at the house backed up her allegations. We wonder whether she could see any of this coming.

(Sources: *The Gate*, July 1993; *Monitoring Times*, December 1992)

HARD ONE TO SWALLOW

Dennis Quigley was inside his motor home one morning parked in Seattle when he heard strange noises outside. When he investigated, he found sewage and what looked like vomit on the ground. Nearby was a 14-year-old boy curled up ill next to a car.

Officer Tom Umporowicz explained: "Apparently the suspect was attempting to steal gasoline and got the sewage tank instead."



BEGIN YOUR NEW WAY OF LIFE NOW!

4th-7th November, 1993	Opens 10am daily.
RNA Showgrounds	Closes 9pm except
Gregory Terrace	Sunday 6pm.
Bowen Hills Brisbane.	Admission \$6

For further information: Phone Ann Groves at Queensland Exhibition Services Pbone (07) 846 4777 Fax (07) 846 2811 PO Box 3232 South Brisbane MAC Qld 4101

QUEENSLAND'S BIGGEST NATURAL & ALTERNATIVE HEALTH SHOW!

OVER 200 EXHIBITS

**PLUS • LECTURES • WORKSHOPS
• ENTERTAINMENT**

Find out more about...

Health products, natural therapies, stress relief, allergies, vitamins, herbs, massage, positive thinking, personal growth, environmental products, books, gifts, music... plus much more

Do it naturally...

BHH/1

THE TWILIGHT ZONE

Quigley decided not to press charges against the youth, figuring he'd had enough punishment. Besides, "It's the best laugh I've ever had," he said.

(Source: *Fortean Times* #68)

THYLACINE DROPS IN?

It has hind legs, a tail like a kangaroo, and a front end like a dog with 14 curved stripes across its back. Two thousand years ago the thylacine was a common sight foraging in the Queensland outback. Then it disappeared, presumed extinct.

But Percy Trezise, a 70-year-old artist, writer and bushman, believes the creature still walks. Visitors to the Daintree have reported seeing strange animals, and Percy is convinced a family of up to five is living near his remote homestead 340 km northwest of Cairns.

He has been casually tracking the tiger for 20 years and reckons it's time to "blow the lid off the whole thing". Armed with a bag of droppings (which he has kept in his freezer), and castings of what he hopes are thylacine tracks, Trezise leaves for Cairns today to examine his findings with experts from James Cook University.

"The general opinion is they have been extinct on the mainland for 2,000 years, but I don't know what evidence that is based on. I want to zero in on locating these animals. I expect over the next couple of months to get photos," he said.

Trezise says the Queensland thylacine was (or is) the same as the Tasmanian Tiger which is also believed to be extinct—the last one died in captivity in 1936.

The creature is hard to spot because it is nocturnal and has "mastered the art of remaining invisible" to escape the dingo and domestic dogs.

(Source: *The Australian*, 31 August 1993)

STUCK FOR WORDS

Jim, an engineer, was hard at work in his Wollongong office on Monday when a front tooth on his dental plate broke. Hating dentists, and preferring not to go through a traumatic time in the chair, Jim decided on DIY. He slipped out to a nearby shop and bought a tube of Superglue.

Back in the office, Jim was sticking the tooth back on the plate when someone knocked at his door. He hastily shoved the plate back into his mouth—sticking not

only his lips together but also the plate to the roof of his mouth.

He's managed to pry his lips apart but it's going to take a long, painful visit to the dentist today to remove the plate.

(Source: *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 March 1993)

VISION VAPOURS

NEW YORK — Rumours that a vision of Jesus Christ graces a Manhattan bathroom window have had thousands lining up to catch a glimpse.

Rosa Diez noticed what appeared to be Jesus Christ's face on the bathroom window of her fifth-floor apartment on Friday.

A priest declared it was nothing more than condensation between double panes.

Yet that didn't stop a steady stream of onlookers, many ill and in wheelchairs, lining around the block to stare at the window. Many said they did indeed see a vision of Christ.

Priests scoffed at the claims, saying Christ had a better place to appear than a toilet.

(Source: *Herald Sun*, 10 August 1993)